

## Beginning-Level Activity

### Learning Objectives

Students will be able to

- examine color, shape, and **symbols** in a late-nineteenth-century painting;
- create a **self-portrait** as a character from the painting;
- perform the dance that is depicted in the painting.

### Materials

- Reproduction of *A Centennial of Independence* by Henri Rousseau
- Background Information and Questions for Teaching about the painting
- Internet access or CD or MP3 player
- **Farandole** music (available on the Web site *Traditional Music from County of Nice* [mtn.free.fr/mtn-traditional-music-midi-farandole.php] or on a CD. A video clip depicting the farandole dance is available on the YouTube Web site [www.youtube.com/watch?v=FHQqojO95xw].)
- Wax crayons
- Watercolors (either food dye and Kool-Aid® or radiant watercolors)
- Watercolor brushes
- 18 x 24 inch sheets of watercolor paper
- Yarn

### Lesson Steps

1. Display a reproduction of *A Centennial of Independence*. Have students take time to look closely at the painting. Then ask the following questions:
  - What shapes do you see? Which shapes are repeated and thus form patterns?
  - What colors do you see? What do the colors tell us about the mood?
  - What are the people doing? What else are they doing? (*People in the center are holding hands and dancing while some people are standing and observing. A drummer can be seen on the left-hand side of the painting.*)
  - What are the dancers wearing? (*They are wearing traditional **peasant** clothing and red **Phrygian caps**.*)
  - What are they dancing around? (*They are dancing around liberty trees that were planted during the **French Revolution**.*)
2. Tell students that this painting of a celebration was used to remind people about a very important hundred-year anniversary in France. Ask students to share their favorite celebration. Share age-appropriate information about the painting with students (see Background Information). In particular, explain that the people in the painting are dancing the farandole, a country dance from the south of France. Ask students to think of examples of dances they perform at celebrations.

## HISTORICAL WITNESS

### ★ SOCIAL MESSAGING ★

3. Discuss the definition of symbols. Explain that there are many symbols in this painting, which people would have understood when the picture was made. The symbols celebrate the country's history. Ask students to share symbols that remind them of a special celebration (such as the Fourth of July). Point out that the artist Henri Rousseau borrowed the scene of people doing the farandole from a magazine and later added symbols to tell a story of a specific celebration. Instruct students to look at the painting carefully and imagine that they are the dancers. You may wish to listen to the music that traditionally is played during this dance while looking at the painting. Music clips are available on the Web site *Traditional Music from County of Nice* ([mtcn.free.fr/mtcn-traditional-music-midi-farandole.php](http://mtcn.free.fr/mtcn-traditional-music-midi-farandole.php)).
4. Tell students that the farandole is a lively country dance performed by both males and females. In a farandole, the dancers hold hands, form a chain, and follow a leader through a winding course. This dance can be performed as a line that grows when more people join in. At certain moments during the dance, the dancers close the chain by forming a circle—the people at the front and back ends of the line hold hands and dance in alternating directions.
5. Invite all your students to the center of the room. Ask them to form a circle, hold hands, and skip to the right to the beat of the music. Next, instruct them to skip to the left. For upper elementary students, invite one table at a time to line up, hold hands, and skip in a winding way between the tables in your class. Once the first group has created a curving path around the class, invite the next tables to join in the chain until the entire class is part of the chain. Finally, close the chain and alternate skipping in both directions. When finished, invite students to discuss and demonstrate their favorite types of dances that they perform during celebrations.
6. Have students look back at the painting and select one character. Remind students to look closely at the character's pose and what he or she is wearing. Next, distribute crayons, watercolors, watercolor brushes, and 18 x 24 inch sheets of watercolor paper. Direct students to use the paper in a portrait orientation so that the long side of the page is vertical. Tell students that they will create a self-portrait in the pose of a character from the painting. Remind students to add costume elements from the picture, such as the red Phrygian caps, peasants' clothing, powdered wigs, and tights. Encourage students to include personal symbols that are important to them as part of their self-portraits.
7. Display the brightly colored self-portraits on yarn above eye level around your classroom, like the banners in the painting. Play the music and dance the farandole once more.

### Assessment

Check students' self-portraits to see whether colors, shapes, and accessories from the painting were added. Assess students on their ability to follow directions and learn and perform the farandole.

